

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 06829 01 OF 03 081945Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 06829
EXDIS
E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR FR US XA XF XO EGEN
SUBJ: FRENCH POLICY TOWARDS THE THIRD WORLD:
OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE UNITED STATES

REF: PARIS 2315 (EXDIS)

1. REFTTEL PROVIDED THE AMBASSADOR'S OVERALL
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NEW ADMINISTRATION ON POLICY
TOWARDS FRANCE. THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES ADDITIONAL IDEAS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF FRANCE'S THIRD
WORLD POLICY.

2. BEGIN SUMMARY: FOR A NUMBER OF DEEPLY-HELD REASONS,
THE FRENCH HAVE MAINTAINED AN EXTRAORDINARY INTEREST IN
AFRICA AND ASIA AND MADE A MAJOR ASSISTANCE EFFORT IN
THE THIRD WORLD. FRENCH POLICY TOWARDS THE DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES IS DESIGNED TO BOLSTER THE IMAGE OF FRANCE
AS THEIR DEFENDER IN THE WEST. THE GOF CLAIMS
PARENTAGE OF THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE AND WANTS IT TO
SUCCEED. LARGELY BECAUSE OF ITS DEPENDENCE ON OIL AND
RAW MATERIAL PRODUCERS, FRANCE PROJECTS ITSELF AS
LEADER AMONG THE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES IN ITS
RESPONSIVENESS TO LDC DESIRES. IN PRACTICE, FRANCE
MAKES NO MAJOR CONCESSIONS, BUT HIDES BEHIND EC OR
DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONCERNS TO AVOID GIVING ANYTHING
AWAY.

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PAGE 02 PARIS 06829 01 OF 03 081945Z

3. THE FRENCH SOUND SYMPATHETIC TO THIRD WORLD
POLITICAL INTERESTS IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES, TOO, BUT
IN PRACTICE, FOLLOW A HARD LINE. TO ASSERT FRENCH
SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE, THEY MARK THEIR
DIFFERENCES WITH OTHER WESTERN STATES. BUT THE FRENCH
WORLD VIEW IS CHANGING TOWARDS A PERCEPTION THAT

AMERICAN AND FRENCH INTERESTS TEND TO COINCIDE IN THE THIRD WORLD. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS EVOLUTION OFFERS THE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE ITS THIRD WORLD INTERESTS THROUGH DEEPENED BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE FRENCH, ESPECIALLY ON AFRICAN, NEAR EASTERN, INDIAN OCEAN, AND NORTH-SOUTH QUESTIONS, AS DESCRIBED BELOW. END SUMMARY.

4. UNLIKE THE OTHER EUROPEAN COLONIAL POWERS, FRANCE HAS MAINTAINED EXTRAORDINARY INTEREST IN THE AFRICAN AND ASIAN COUNTRIES THAT WERE ONCE PART OF ITS EMPIRE (AND, OF COURSE, STILL POSSESSES OVERSEAS DEPARTMENTS AND TERRITORIES IN THE MAJOR OCEANS). WHETHER LEAVING UNDER PRESSURE, AS IN ALGERIA AND INDOCHINA, OR GRACEFULLY, AS IN MOST OF BLACK AFRICA, THE FRENCH HAVE SOUGHT TO REASSERT THEIR INFLUENCE FOR ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND SENTIMENTAL/MYTHIC REASONS. AMONG THESE ARE AN ALMOST PATHOLOGICAL CONCERN FOR THE PRESERVATION AND EXTENSION OF FRANCOPHONIE AND THE DOGGED FRENCH PRETENSION TO BE THE FIRST AMONG THE LESS-THAN-SUPER GREAT POWERS. SYMBOLIC OF THIS EFFORT IS THE FACT THAT FRANCE, NOT THE US OR USSR, MAINTAINS THE LARGEST NAVAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

5. LACKING RESOURCES TO COMPARE WITH THOSE OF THE SUPER-POWERS, FRANCE NONETHELESS HAS MADE A MAJOR ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EFFORT IN THE THIRD WORLD, PRIMARILY IN FORMER FRENCH COLONIES IN AFRICA, AND CONTRIBUTES ON A PER CAPITA BASIS ABOUT DOUBLE THE

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PAGE 03 PARIS 06829 01 OF 03 081945Z

AMERICAN FIGURE. IN ADDITION, FRANCE HAS FOLLOWED A POLICY TOWARDS THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE ARAB AND AFRICAN STATES, DESIGNED TO BOLSTER THE IMAGE OF FRANCE AS THEIR SPOKESMAN AND DEFENDER IN THE WESTERN WORLD. FRANCE IS DEPENDENT ON THE OIL PRODUCERS AND OTHER RAW MATERIALS PRODUCERS FOR MOST OF

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PAGE 01 PARIS 06829 02 OF 03 081950Z
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R 082024Z MAR 77
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 06829

EXDIS

HER NEEDS. THIS DEPENDENCE IS ONE OF THE MAJOR FACTORS
INFLUENCING FRENCH ATTITUDES ON ECONOMIC ISSUES OF
INTEREST TO LDCS IN INTERNATIONAL FORA.

6. THUS, THE GOF, AND PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING IN
PARTICULAR, CLAIM PARENTAGE OF THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE.
THE FRENCH THESIS ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT A DIALOGUE WAS
PREFERABLE TO CONFRONTATION WITH THE OIL PRODUCERS, AND
THAT IS ONE REASON THEY REFUSED TO JOIN THE IEA. WHEN
THE OIL PRODUCERS SOUGHT TO BROADEN THE DIALOGUE TO
INCLUDE RAW MATERIALS, DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, THE FRENCH WERE SYMPATHETIC. NOW
THAT WE ARE ALL INVOLVED IN THE DIALOGUE, THE GOF WANTS
IT TO SUCCEED AND WILL URGE ITS EC PARTNERS TO PREPARE
AN ATTRACTIVE PACKAGE FOR THE CIEC MINISTERIAL EXPECTED
IN LATE MAY OR EARLY JUNE.

7. THE GOF WISHES TO PROJECT ITSELF AS THE LEADER AMONG
THE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES IN ITS SYMPATHY,
RESPONSIVENESS TO LDC DESIRES. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GOF WAS
INFLUENTIAL IN BRINGING THE EC TO AGREE TO ESTABLISH
GENERALIZED TARIFF PREFERENCES FOR ASSOCIATED DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES. AT UN SESSIONS FRANCE IS OFTEN OUT AHEAD OF
OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN ITS WILLINGNESS TO
SUPPORT NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER AND RELATED
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PAGE 02 PARIS 06829 02 OF 03 081950Z

CONCEPTS, SUCH AS THE CHARTER ON ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND
DUTIES OF STATES.

8. ALL THIS SYMPATHY, HOWEVER, DOES NOT GET TRANSLATED
INTO MAJOR CONCESSIONS. THE FRENCH DRIVE A HARD BARGAIN.
THUS WHILE SPEECHES AND GENERAL STATEMENTS SHOW GOOD
WILL, THEY DO NOT PREVENT THE GOF FROM HIDING BEHIND THE
EC OR DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONCERNS SO AS NOT TO GIVE

ANYTHING AWAY. FRANCE IS BEING MUCH TOUGHER THAN THE US CONCERNING RENEWAL OF THE MULTIFIBER AGREEMENT, FOR EXAMPLE.

9. ON POLITICAL QUESTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL FORA THE FRENCH ALSO SOUND A MORE SYMPATHETIC LINE THAN THEY, IN FACT, FOLLOW. FOR INSTANCE, THE FRENCH LOUDLY CONDEMN APARTHEID, BUT ONLY RECENTLY INDICATED THAT THEY WILL STOP ARMS SALES (EXCEPT NAVAL) TO SOUTH AFRICA, FOR WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN PRINCIPAL ARMS SUPPLIER. BUT THE FRENCH TAKE PAINS TO APPEAR OUT OF STEP WITH OTHER WESTERNERS AT THE UN ON POLITICAL ISSUES, SUCH AS THE MIDDLE EAST, AS WELL AS ON ECONOMIC QUESTIONS. THERE HAS BEEN SOME IMPROVEMENT RECENTLY IN THIS RESPECT, DUE IN PART TO GISCARD'S ATTEMPT TO LIMIT PUBLIC DISAGREEMENT WITH FRANCE'S ALLIES, BUT THE BASIC DRIVE TO ASSERT FRENCH SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE REMAINS. WERE THE LEFT TO WIN THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, THE TENDENCY FOR FRANCE TO MARK ITS DIFFERENCES WITH ITS PARTNERS AND TO SUPPORT LDC POSITIONS ON BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC QUESTIONS WOULD GROW.

10. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FRENCH WORLD VIEW HAS EVOLVED, IN THE SENSE THAT THEY INCREASINGLY PERCEIVE THAT TRADE QUESTIONS ASIDE, AMERICAN AND FRENCH INTERESTS TEND TO COINCIDE IN MUCH OF THE THIRD WORLD. AS A RESULT OF THIS CHANGING PERCEPTION, THE FRENCH RECENTLY HAVE WORKED MUCH MORE CLOSELY WITH US IN SEVERAL AREAS. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 06829 02 OF 03 081950Z

IN AFRICA, FRENCH THINKING ON THE PROBLEMS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE HORN PROBABLY HAS BEEN CLOSER THAN THAT OF ANY OTHER EUROPEAN POWER TO OUR OWN; COORDINATION OF OUR ACTIONS TOWARDS ANGOLA WAS ONE RESULT. WE ALSO ARE WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER ON SAHEL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. IN THE MIDDLE EAST, FRENCH ATTEMPTS TO OBSTRUCT US SETTLEMENT EFFORTS HAVE ABATED AND CAUTIOUS SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN ROLE THERE APPEARS TO BE GROWING. IN ASIA, REFLECTING ITS FORMER COLONIAL ROLE IN INDOCHINA, FRANCE HAS ATTEMPTED TO HAVE A "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH HANOI. IT HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO US ON HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS IN VIETNAM. IN LATIN AMERICA, THE FRENCH ACKNOWLEDGE OUR POLITICAL PRIMACY AND CHALLENGE US SERIOUSLY ONLY IN THE TRADE SPHERE.

11. GIVEN THIS EVOLUTION IN FRENCH VIEWS, BUT NEVER FORGETTING THEIR OBSESSION WITH FRANCE'S SOVEREIGN, INDEPENDENT, WORLD ROLE, THE US NOW APPEARS TO HAVE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE ITS THIRD WORLD INTERESTS BY DEEPENING BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS WITH

THE FRENCH, ESPECIALLY ON AFRICAN, NEAR EASTERN, INDIAN
OCEAN AND NORTH-SOUTH QUESTIONS. FRENCH INFLUENCE IN
NORTH, WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA PROBABLY REMAINS GREATER

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PAGE 01 PARIS 06829 03 OF 03 081950Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 PARIS 06829

EXDIS

THAN THAT OF ANY OTHER EUROPEAN POWER. THROUGH
INCREASED HIGH-LEVEL FRANCO-AMERICAN DISCUSSIONS ON
THOSE AREAS (AS WELL AS ON THE HORN), WE SHOULD BE ABLE
TO LIMIT ANY FRENCH ACTIONS UNHELPFUL TO OUR POLICIES
AND TO FIND WAYS TO ADVANCE OUR OWN INTERESTS BY MAKING
BETTER MUTUAL USE OF FRANCE'S CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES IN
THE AREA.

12. EQUALLY, IN THE MIDDLE EAST, GREATER CONSULTATION
BETWEEN US WOULD SEEM USEFUL, ALTHOUGH WE RECOGNIZE THAT
FRANCE'S PRO-ARAB TILT AND THE SPECIAL US ROLE IN THE
ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT MAKE THIS AREA MORE DIFFICULT.
BUT THE FRENCH WANT A PIECE OF THE ACTION AND COULD PLAY
A SPOILER'S GAME IF WE FAIL TO GIVE THEM AT LEAST THE
APPEARANCE OF HAVING BEEN A PARTY TO THE PROCESS.
MORE IN-DEPTH CONSULTATION AT HIGH LEVELS WOULD REDUCE
THE CHANCES OF A NEGATIVE FRENCH ROLE AND IN LIGHT OF
FRANCE'S PARTICULARLY GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE ARABS,
COULD OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR A POSITIVE FRENCH
CONTRIBUTION AT A LATTER STAGE OF SETTLEMENT EFFORTS.
FRANCE'S INFLUENCE WITHIN THE EC IN SUCH
MATTERS AS THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE IS ANOTHER REASON TO
BRING THE FRENCH INTO CLOSER CONSULTATION WITH US; NOT

DOING SO MIGHT RISK NOT ONLY FRENCH BUT EUROPEAN OBSTRUC-
TIVE ACTION IN THE REGION.
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PAGE 02 PARIS 06829 03 OF 03 081950Z

13. BILATERAL TALKS WITH THE FRENCH ON THE INDIAN OCEAN
SEEM IN OUR INTEREST. AS OUR SOLE EUROPEAN ALLY WHICH
POSSESSES POPULATED TERRITORY IN THE AREA, AND WHICH HAS
AN ACTIVE POLICY TO DEFEND BOTH THAT TERRITORY AND THE
VITAL OIL SUPPLY ROUTE, FRANCE, IT SEEMS TO US, COULD
CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO OUR INDIAN OCEAN POLICY
THINKING.

14. FINALLY, TAKING ACCOUNT OF FRENCH ATTITUDES DE-
SCRIBED ABOVE, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A CLOSE
BILATERAL DIALOGUE ON NORTH-SOUTH MATTERS. DESPITE
THEIR RHETORIC, THE FRENCH ARE AS CONCERNED AS WE ABOUT
LDC DEMANDS ON THE DEVELOPED WORLD AND AT LEAST AS
RELUCTANT TO GIVE UP ANY ADVANTAGE. THERE MAY BE
MOMENTS WHEN THROUGH OUR CLOSE CONSULTATIONS WE CAN
CAPITALIZE ON THAT FACT AND PERSUADE THE SOMETIMES LESS
VULNERABLE FRENCH TO DEFEND PUBLICLY A COMMON POSITION
WHICH WE OTHERWISE MIGHT HAVE TO STAKE OUT ALONE.
RUSH

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